

INTERNATIONAL SECURITY / MIDDLE EAST UPDATE
August 16 - 23, 2012

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1. [Summer 'Highly Successful' for ISAF and Afghan Forces, Allen Says](#) (08-23-2012)

By Army Sgt. 1st Class Tyrone C. Marshall Jr.
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, Aug. 23, 2012 – The International Security Assistance Force has kept tireless pressure on the enemy in Afghanistan, Marine Corps Gen. John R. Allen, ISAF commander, said today.

“It's been a busy summer for us, and in ways not readily evident to most outside Afghanistan, it's been a highly successful summer,” the top coalition commander told Pentagon reporters in a video teleconference.

“Coalition and Afghan forces have maintained unrelenting pressure on the insurgents, and we have denied and disrupted their operations and have largely pushed them out of the population centers,” he added.

Partnered with Afghan forces, ISAF troops have been able to limit the enemy's freedom of movement and disrupt their logistics, the general said.

“We've taken scores of their leaders and fighters off the battlefield, and we've systematically separated the insurgents from more and more of the Afghan population,” Allen said. “Insurgent attacks, while still indiscriminate and deadly, are increasingly localized, affecting an ever-shrinking proportion of the Afghan population. The insurgency we face today, while still active, dangerous and capable of inflicting harm, is trying hard to project its strength as its position continues to slowly erode.”

More and more, the general said, Afghan national security forces are leading operations.

“Partnered operations have increasingly been led by Afghan forces, and the insurgency is today confronted by a rapidly transforming and increasingly capable Afghan national security force, which is bearing a larger share of the burden and a larger share of the sacrifice,” he said.

As fighting continues, Allen said, Afghan security forces leading the fight have suffered the toll of larger casualties.

“As we continue to mourn our own precious and honored dead, we recognize that our Afghan partners are now suffering the preponderance of the friendly casualties,” he said. “Their resilience, reinforced by the commitment of the international community to stand by Afghanistan well after 2014, has sent a powerful and a disheartening signal to the insurgents.

“For the insurgents to prevail, they will have to keep up their increasingly costly fight for at least another decade,” Allen added.

Significant work remains to be done from now until the end of 2014, when Afghan forces will be responsible for their nation’s security, the general said.

“With 28 months left in the ISAF mission, we are forging ahead with the process of transition,” he added. “Ultimately, our goal will not only be achieved by that which will be secured by ISAF forces, but primarily ... by Afghan forces. As the Afghans assume full responsibility for the security of their country, our support will continue.”

The effort in Afghanistan is a continuum, Allen said, creating a series of conditions that ultimately will make the country a sovereign state secured by its own national security forces.

“We aim to leave behind a stable Afghanistan, a contributor to the stability and the prosperity of the region, and never again a safe haven for the terrorists,” he said. “That remains our objective, and we’re on track to achieve it.”

Biographies:

[Marine Corps Gen. John R. Allen](#)

Related Sites:

[Transcript](#)

[NATO International Security Assistance Force](#)

Related Articles:

[Allen Predicts Period of Hope and Challenge in Afghanistan’s Future](#)

[Allen: Closer Ties With Partners May Reduce Insider Attack Threat](#)

2. DOD Has Running Start on Biosurveillance Strategy (08-22-2012)

By Cheryl Pellerin

American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, Aug. 22, 2012 – The White House has issued the first U.S. National Strategy for Biosurveillance to quickly detect a range of global health and security hazards, and the Defense Department has a running start in implementing the new plan, a senior defense official said.

Andrew C. Weber, assistant secretary of defense for nuclear, chemical and biological defense programs, told American Forces Press Service that many of the activities described in the strategy are ongoing at DOD.

Such efforts, he said, “have been a little bit siloed.”

“So much of what we’re doing is integrating the efforts and working hard on the overlap between global security and global health, in what President Barack Obama refers to as global health security,” he said.

Biosurveillance is defined as data gathering, analysis and interpretation of data related to disease activity and threats to human and animal health to achieve early warning, detection and situational awareness.

In a letter that introduces the new strategy, Obama said the United States “must be prepared for the full range of threats, including a terrorist attack involving a biological agent and the spread of infectious diseases and food-borne illnesses.”

The strategy calls for a coordinated approach involving federal, state, local and tribal governments; the private sector; nongovernmental organizations; and international partners.

“It challenges us,” the president wrote, “to take full advantage of the advanced technologies, new vaccines, the latest science, and social media that can help keep our citizens safe. It describes the core functions and critical capabilities we need to succeed.”

Within 120 days, the White House will complete a strategic implementation plan that lays out the required actions and responsibilities of all partners in the mission, Obama said.

As the strategy is released, 43 U.S. states have reported West Nile virus infections in people, birds and mosquitoes, and about 700 cases and 26 deaths have been reported to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta.

The virus was first isolated from a feverish woman in the West Nile District of Uganda in 1937, and from there it spread to Egypt, Israel, France and, in 1999, to the United States. According to CDC, the virus’s spread in the U.S is a milestone in its evolving history.

Monitoring and understanding infectious disease always has been a DOD priority, Weber said, “because for much of our history we’ve been a global force, and we’ve had to understand what we call exotic infectious diseases.”

Defense Department researchers developed many of the vaccines that protect against malaria, dengue fever and other diseases, he said, “and Army Maj. (Dr.) Walter Reed in the 19th century did groundbreaking work on the yellow fever virus.”

The renewed focus on biosurveillance speeds up the convergence of traditional battlefield biodefense and health surveillance, Weber said.

“It’s all about saving lives,” he added. “The sooner you recognize that a biological event is happening, the greater your ability to isolate it, contain it and prevent it from spreading around the world, like H1N1,” the novel swine flu virus whose spreading infections the World Health Organization announced as a pandemic on June 11, 2009.

Many DOD components have long been directly involved in global biosurveillance. These include Weber's office, the Defense Threat Reduction Agency, and Global Emerging Infections Surveillance and Response System Operations, called GEIS, which is part of the Armed Forces Health Surveillance Center.

"Through our Armed Forces Health Surveillance Network and our Medical Research and Materiel Command," Weber said, "we have a network of three U.S. Army and three U.S. Navy laboratories in places like Cairo, Egypt; Lima, Peru; Nairobi, Kenya; Bangkok, Thailand; and now in Tbilisi, Georgia."

Last week Weber, along with Sen. Richard Lugar of Indiana and Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili, rededicated a central public health reference laboratory in Tbilisi built with funding from the Pentagon's Cooperative Threat Reduction Program.

"This is a partnership with the government of Georgia, the Walter Reed Institute of Research and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control that will provide a regional biosurveillance hub linked to the World Health Organization so we can map, detect and understand infectious diseases circulating in the South Caucasus and the Black Sea regions," Weber said.

The other six GEIS laboratories focus on human health and disease carriers, or vectors, like birds and mosquitoes, he added, but the Georgia center will be different.

"From the beginning on the Georgian side, work on the center's mission includes their agricultural ministry, their health ministry and their national center for disease control," Weber said.

"On the U.S. side, we have participation from different parts of DOD, including the GEIS program and the Medical Research and Materiel Command, as well as other U.S. government partners like CDC."

Internationally, he added, "we're working with OIE -- the World Organization for Animal Health. ... We're also working with the Food and Agriculture Organization in Rome, and ... we're discussing a new partnership with FAO as well as WHO, both their headquarters in Geneva and their regional offices, including the European regional office based in Copenhagen, Denmark."

With the government of Kazakhstan, he added, "we are building a similar laboratory capability in Almaty. When it's complete, the project will involve on ... Kazakhstan's side the animal health authorities and their agriculture ministry, their ministry of education and science on the research side and the health ministry. On the U.S. side, the Centers for Disease Control will be a strategic partner."

Much of the DOD global network was developed in response to the outbreak of highly pathogenic H5N1 -- which spread rapidly westward in wild birds from Qinghai Lake, China, in 2005 -- and later, the H1N1 swine flu outbreaks, Weber said.

"There was a lot of one-time funding for pandemic flu that we were able to build on and broaden beyond the focus on one infectious disease," he added.

Weber said DOD's preparedness domestically and globally increased as a result of its response first to the outbreak of severe acute respiratory syndrome, or SARS, in 2002, but especially to H5N1 avian flu three years later.

“What was important about both outbreaks is that they helped give birth to the ‘One Health’ concept,” he said. “Because H5N1 was a poultry disease that jumped species to humans, it got the veterinarian community, the animal health community and the human health community to work together.”

One Health is an international effort by veterinarians, physicians and other health professionals to integrate health care for people, animals, agriculture and the environment.

“Biosurveillance is about early detection and prediction of biological events no matter what their cause,” Weber said, “so we can save lives, so we can continue military operations, and protect American citizens and our forces and families around the world.”

The new strategy and the implementation plan that will come out of it, he added, “will help us improve integration, accelerate activities and increase resources to make it an even higher priority.”

Biographies:

[Andrew C. Weber](#)

Related Sites:

[National Strategy for Biosurveillance](#)

[Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Nuclear, Chemical and Biological Defense Programs](#)

Related Articles:

[Global Nature of Terrorism Drives Biosurveillance](#)

3. U.S. Humanitarian Assistance for Those Affected by the Violence in Syria (08-22-2012)

Posted by David Robinson

David Robinson serves as Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for [Population, Refugees, and Migration](#).

Yesterday, I participated in two events, using new tools -- specifically social media -- to explain the ways that the United States is providing humanitarian assistance to those affected by the violence in Syria. I started off the morning with Mark Bartolini, the Director of the [Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance at USAID](#) in a "[Live At State](#)" forum. This format is a virtual press conference; journalists log-in, submit questions in real time, and watch the discussion online from wherever they are around the world. Over 15 international media outlets participated, and we were able to reinforce the message that Syrians are not alone during this crisis, that the United States is deeply engaged in providing relief and assistance.

That event was followed by a [Facebook chat](#) on the same topic, open to the public. We reached participants asking questions from around the world. A single mother asked a question about how she could help the Syrian people, and we heard from many Iraqis who had fled to the then-relative safety of Syria, only to be displaced again by the new round of violence in the region. Other interested international participants asked great questions about how aid is distributed and monitored.

These new means of communicating offer the State Department the opportunity to share an important story. We are currently providing nearly \$82 million in humanitarian assistance to support those affected by the violence in Syria. This assistance is programmed through experienced partners, including UNHCR, ICRC, WFP and other international and non-governmental organizations. These organizations have trained, professional staff on the ground who risk their own lives to distribute aid to the people who need it most. Providing assistance in times of crisis is challenging enough, but this is magnified by a lack of access to those trapped by the fighting in Syria. Many relief agencies have reported that the insecure environment within Syria is causing delays or blockages in getting relief to the most vulnerable. We continue to call on all parties to the conflict to allow humanitarian workers and aid safe passage to reach the people in need.

We understand the frustration of those who desperately want help, security and safety. The United States is working tirelessly with its international partners and other governments to pre-position supplies in the region and to move them into Syria as quickly as conditions allow. In fact, we've significantly scaled up assistance in the past several months. Right now our assistance is reaching 780,000 people inside Syria, and our support to neighboring countries, international partners and other agencies has helped provide aid to the tens of thousands who have fled the country. All this has been possible because, for more than 30 years, the U.S. has been instrumental in creating and enabling a robust international humanitarian architecture to respond to crises like these.

The conversations I had yesterday help provide a clear sense of where the spotlight must shine, to draw attention to those most in need. The United States is the leading contributor to humanitarian assistance across the globe and as we address the conflict in Syria, we are simultaneously responding to dozens of crises around the world where civilians are at risk. We will continue to be a pillar for international humanitarian assistance, and support the important work that our international and non-governmental organization partners carry out. It is our deepest hope that the violence that created this humanitarian emergency will end, and with it, the suffering of the Syrian people. Like those who fled, we too look forward to the day when a political solution will allow Syrians to return to their homes to build a democratic Syria.

4. Panetta Discusses Afghanistan Progress with Karzai (08-19-2012)

By Amaani Lyle
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, Aug. 19, 2012 – Defense Secretary Leon E. Panetta spoke with Afghan President Hamid Karzai on the telephone yesterday, discussing the “significant progress” of American and Afghan forces as the transition process moves forward, said Pentagon Press Secretary George Little.

The two leaders talked about the challenges of insider attacks against coalition and Afghan forces, and Panetta thanked Karzai for his recent statements condemning such attacks, Little said in a statement.

“They expressed shared concern over this issue and agreed that American and Afghan officials should work even more closely together to minimize the potential for insider attacks in the future,” Little said.

Panetta also encouraged Karzai to maintain ongoing rapport with Marine Corps Gen. John Allen, International Security Assistance Forces commander, in efforts to further strengthen ISAF-Afghan cooperation and counter the insider attack threat, Little said.

Measures to counter the threat include augmented counterintelligence, more rigorous vetting of Afghan recruits and heightened engagement with village elders, who often play a key role by vouching for Afghan security personnel, Little added.

Biographies:

[Leon E. Panetta](#)

Related Sites:

[NATO International Security Assistance Force](#)

5. Dempsey: Transition in Military Uncomfortable, But Necessary (08-17-2012)

By Claudette Roulo

American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, Aug. 17, 2012 – The chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff says the military must undergo three transitions in the coming years, with each dependent on finding the best way forward in lean economic times.

During a town hall Thursday in Rosemount, Minn., Army Gen. Martin E. Dempsey told Minnesota National Guardsmen determining the best way to transform the military isn't just about what's best for the armed forces, but "really about figuring out what's best for the country" in the years ahead.

"What does the nation need in 2020?" Dempsey asked. "How do we build that capability? ... How do we deliver in a way that's affordable for the nation?"

"We're all citizens first," he said. "Therefore, I think we've got to figure out how to help the country through that economic challenge while preserving the military that it needs."

Dempsey highlighted his three transitions. First, he said, is to move from a military that is generally focused on deploying for combat into one that can perform missions besides counterinsurgency.

Service members of his generation were criticized as being "stuck in a Cold War mentality," Dempsey said.

"It was a challenge, I will admit to you," he said, "for us to change the way we looked at problems from that Cold War paradigm into the counterinsurgency paradigm."

"I would submit to you that those of you that have done nothing but counterinsurgency are going to have exactly the same challenge going back to looking at other kinds of warfare," he said.

But that's exactly what service members must do, Dempsey said. "Not because we think it's on ... the horizon, but it could be someday and you can't wait until it's there to get ready for it."

The second transition is economic, he said, and involves managing a shift from the "largely unconstrained budgets of the last ten years -- 'if you needed it you got it' -- to something that is going to be more constrained."

That might make service members uncomfortable, the chairman said, but the military has an obligation to become more affordable to the country. "Why? Because national power ... is actually

the aggregate of three things, not just the military,” Dempsey said. “It is the military, but it's also economic well-being and it's also diplomatic influence.”

The last transition is the drawdown of military members. Over the next five to six years, the Army and Marines will reduce in size by about 120,000 people in total, he continued.

“We owe it to those young men and women who have served so honorably and so well to make sure we take care of them,” Dempsey said.

“In all of that we've got to keep faith with our military family,” he said, adding that family includes veterans, wounded warriors and the parents and spouses of service members killed in action.

One way to keep faith as the Defense Department draws down is to guarantee that resources continue to be dedicated to family support programs, Dempsey said.

“The challenge of course, is we've got 1,000 flowers blooming out there,” he said. “We've got to make sure that we can identify the ones that are most important and ensure we continue to resource those.”

“The second way we keep faith is by pay, compensation, healthcare and retirement,” the chairman added.

Finally, he said, keeping faith with the military family means providing the toughest training possible. “I'm not keeping faith with you if I resource all that other stuff and I don't train you,” he explained, “because then I send you off to war and you're not ready for it.”

“Change is always uncomfortable,” Dempsey said, “but often if we're agile enough, the change can actually make things better for us and improve relationships, not disrupt them.”

Biographies:

[Army Gen. Martin E. Dempsey](#)

6. Syria's Suspension from Islamic Group Shows Assad's Isolation (08-16-2012)

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington — The Obama administration welcomed the decision of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to suspend Syria's membership in the OIC because of the ongoing violence against the Syrian people by Bashar al-Assad's regime.

State Department spokeswoman Victoria Nuland said August 15 that Syria's suspension “sent a strong message” to the Assad regime and commended the OIC for the move and for its commitment to a peaceful resolution of the 17-month-old conflict.

“Today's action underscores the Assad regime's increasing international isolation and the widespread support for the Syrian people and their struggle for a democratic state that represents their aspirations and respects their human rights,” Nuland said in a statement released by the State Department.

The United States sent Special Envoy to the OIC Rashad Hussain to the organization's heads of state summit in the Muslim holy city of Mecca.

Hussain held bilateral meetings with several leaders on the margins of the summit to discuss Syria and other issues, according to an August 15 State Department media note.

"Special Envoy Hussain's attendance demonstrates the United States' commitment to working with our partners in the international community to support the aspirations of the Syrian people and bring additional pressure to bear on the Assad regime," the media note said.

U.N. HUMANITARIAN CHIEF CALLS FOR MORE SYRIA AID

In Damascus, Syria, the United Nations' Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Valerie Amos warned that 2.5 million Syrians are in dire need of assistance, and she urged more international funding to support the efforts of nongovernmental organizations on the ground.

"There is more we could be doing right now in areas that are safe enough and where we have established solid partnerships with NGOs and the Syrian Arab Red Crescent," Amos said August 16, according to the U.N. News Centre.

Many families have been displaced as a result of the violence and are now living in public buildings and schools, and in need of health care, shelter, food, water and sanitation, she said.

The 2.5 million figure is a dramatic increase from Amos' March estimates, when she said 1 million were in need of help, and she said lack of funding, as well as insecurity and restrictions in the country, is holding back existing aid efforts.

On August 11, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton announced that the United States is contributing an additional \$5.5 million in humanitarian assistance to support those who have fled the violence.

"With these contributions, the United States is now providing nearly \$82 million for food, emergency health care, blankets, hygiene kits and other humanitarian relief" for Syrian refugees, Clinton said at a news conference in Istanbul.
